

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 5 ISLAMABAD 1791

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN: WEEK SIX

SUMMARY

WITH LESS THAN THREE WEEKS TO GO BEFORE THE ELECTIONS,
POLITICAL ACTIVITY HAS INTENSIFIED AND IS INCREASINGLY
FOCUSSED ON THE PUNJAB. BOTH THE RULING PPP AND THE
OPPOSITION COALITION PNA RECOGNIZE THAT IN WHAT IS BECOMING
A MORE AND MORE UNPREDICTABLE CONTEST BOTH IN TENOR AND
OUTCOME, THE PROVINCE WILL PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE.
ALTHOUGH THE PPP IS NOW VIGOROUSLY COUNTERATTACKING,
THE PNA'S FORWARD SURGE CONTINUES IN BOTH URBAN AND RURAL
AREAS OF THE PROVINCE. ASGHAR KHAN IS INCREASINGLY EMERGING
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AS ITS DE FACTO LEADER. BUOYED BY THE POSITIVE PUBLIC REACTION,
AND APPARENTLY GENUINELY HOPEFUL IT CAN WIN, THE PNA IS
COMING TO GIVE GREATER EMPHASIS IN STATEMENTS TO THE CONDUCT
OF THE CAMPAIGN AND POLLING AND THE THREAT OF A RIGGED OUTCOME.
THE GOVERNMENT AND PPP LEADERSHIP IS AWARE OF THE GREAT
DIFFICULTY THE PARTY FACES IN PUNJAB, AND TWO SENIOR PARTY
LEADERS HAVE IN LAST COUPLE OF DAYS TOLD US IN VIVID TERMS HOW

BAD THE PPP POSITION HAS BECOME BOTH IN THE PROVINCIAL CITIES AND COUNTRYSIDE. PPP COUNTERMEASURES INCLUDE HARD CAMPAIGNING BY NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS SPEARHEADED BY BHUTTO HIMSELF. SPEAKING AT LARGE RALLIES HE HAS STRESSED THEMES WHICH ARE CRITICAL OF THE PNA RATHER THAN FORWARD LOOKING. THE PPP HAS STEPPED UP LARGE-SCALE BUSSING OF AUDIENCES TO RALLIES AND IS MAKING EXTENSIVE USE OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES AND WORKERS WE HAVE ALSO RECEIVED REPORTS THE PPP IS PREPARING TO GO BEYOND LEGAL METHODS TO GUARANTEE A RESPECTABLE VICTORY, INCLUDING STUFFING BALLOT BOXES AND INTIMIDATING VOTERS. VIOLENCE IN THE CAMPAIGN IS SLOWLY BUT STEADILY INCREASING AND TEMPER ARE GROWING HOTTER AS THE CAMPAIGN INTENSIFIES. MEDIA COVERAGE REMAINS UNCHANGED WITH THE PNA VIRTUALLY BLACKED OUT IN GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED PRESS BUT RECEIVING GOOD COVERAGE IN SOME INDEPENDENT PAPERS. STUDENTS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY RESTIVE, BUT EXCEPT IN THE FRONTIER HAVE NOT YET TAKEN OUT ANY MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS. LABOR IS TRYING TO STAY OUT OF THE FRAY THINKING IT IS TOO SOON TO ALIGN WITH EITHER SIDE.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OVERTURN THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM OF A FEW WEEKS BACK THAT THE ELECTION WOULD BE AN EASY PPP SWEEP. FEW HAD EXPECTED THEN THAT THE OPPOSITION WOULD UNITE AND AGREE AS SUCCESSFULLY AS THEY HAVE ON THE DIVISION OF NOMINATIONS. NOR HAD THE POLITICIONS OF EITHER SIDE UNDERSTOOD IN THE ABSENCE OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF ANY SERIOUS OVERT POLITICAL ACTIVITY HOW GREAT WAS PUBLIC DISSATISFACTION CENTERING ON INFLATION AND CORRUPTION. THE POOR SELECTION OF PPP CANDIDATES AND THE SNOWBALL EFFECT THE PNA'S SUCCESS IS HAVING ARE FURTHER
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FACTORS IN EXPLAINING THESE UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS. THE CAMPAIGN IS NOW IN ITS CRUCIAL PHASE. IT IS CLEAR THAT TO ENSURE THE KIND OF RESPECTABLE ELECTORAL VERDICT THEY BELIEVE NECESSARY BHUTTO AND THE PPP MUST FURTHER STEP UP THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITY TO STEM THE PNA TIDE, AND THAT THIS ACTIVITY IS LIKELY TO INCLUDE LARGE-SCALE MANIPULATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY, PARTICULARLY IN THE RURAL PUNJAB. THE PM'S POLITICAL ABILITIES AND CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT APPARATUS MEAN THAT THE PPP'S CAPABILITIES AND RECUPERATIVE POWERS ARE STILL SUBSTANTIAL AND SHOULD NOT BE UNDERRATED. BUT TWO STILL UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS ARE BECOMING CRITICAL: WHAT WILL POPULAR REACTION BE TO THE LIKELY PPP MOVES, AND HOW SURE CAN BHUTTO AND THE PPP BE OF POLICE AND CIVIL SERVICE SUPPORT AS THEY MAKE THEM.

END SUMMARY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 5 ISLAMABAD 1791

1. ACTIVITY INTENSIFIES: WITH LESS THAN THREE WEEKS TO GO BEFORE THE MARCH 7 VOTING FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE MARCH 10 BALLOTING FOR THE FOUR PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES, POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN PAKISTAN HAS BOTH INTENSIFIED AND PROLIFERATED. THE ATTENTION OF BOTH POLITICAL PRACTITIONERS AND OBSERVERS HAS COME INCREASINGLY TO FOCUS ON THE PUNJAB, THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL HEARTLAND WHICH RETURNS 115 OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S 200 DIRECTLY ELECTED MEMBERS. BOTH THE PPP AND THE OPPOSITION COALITION PNA HAVE BROUGHT MANY OF THEIR BIGGEST GUNS INTO PLAY IN THE PROVINCE; BOTH RECOGNIZE THAT IN WHAT IS BECOMING A MORE AND MORE UNPREDICTABLE CONTEST BOTH IN TENOR AND OUTCOME, PUNJAB WILL PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE.

2. THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE. ALTHOUGH THE PPP IS NOW VIGOROUSLY COUNTERATTACKING, THE OPPOSITION COALITION'S MOMENTUM CONTINUES AND HAS NOT DIMINISHED AS ITS CAMPAIGN'S NOVELTY

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HAS WARN OFF. THE PNA'S FORWARD SURGE HAS HIGHLIGHTED BY A MASSIVE RALLY IN MULTAN ON FEBRUARY 11 WHERE A REPORTED

500,000 PEOPLE TURNED OUT TO HEAR THEM. IF THIS REPORT IS TRUE, THE GATHERING WOULD BE THE LARGEST IN THE CITY SINCE FATIMA JINNAH CAMPAIGNED THERE AGAINST AYUB KAHN IN THE 1965 ELECTIONS. AS IT HAS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, THE PNA AGAIN USED THE FORMULA OF MASSING ITS NATIONAL LEADERS FOR THE OCCASION. OF THESE, AIR MARSHAL ASGHAR KHAN IS BECOMING THE PRIME ATTRACTION, WITH THE CROWDS VIEWING HIM AS THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION FIGURE DESPITE MUFTI MAHMUD'S OFFICIAL LEADERSHIP OF THE PNA. WE ARE TOLD THAT ASGHAR'S CAMPAIGNING STYLE HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY OVER HIS EARLIER SHOWINGS, TO THE POINT WHERE BHUTTO NOW ACCUSES HIM OF COPYING THE TACTICS HE HIMSELF USED IN THE 1970 ELECTIONS. IF ASGHAR IS INDEED EMERGING AS PREEMINENT AMONG THE ALLIANCE LEADERS, THIS COULD MAKE A PNA VOTE MORE PALATABLE TO VOTERS CONCERNED BY THE DISPARATE AND HIGHLY UNEVEN CHARACTER OF THE TOP MEN IN THE NINE-PARTY COALITION.

3. THE PNA IS NOW STEPPING UP ITS CAMPAIGN IN RURAL AREAS. ITS CAMPAIGN THEMES HAVE CHANGED LITTLE FROM THOSE REPORTED LAST WEEK, WITH THE ALLIANCE NO DOUBT THINKING IT SHOULD NOT TAMPER WITH A SUCCESSFUL FORMULA. NEAR THE HEAD OF THE LIST IS THE CLAIM THAT THE PPP GOVERNMENT BEARS THE BLAME FOR INFLATION IN PAKISTAN. THIS IS A TELLING POINT WHERE ECONOMIC DISCONTENT IS WIDE-SPREAD AND HAS USUALLY BEEN THE CATALYST FOR THE FALL OF GOVERNMENTS. BUOYED BY THE POSITIVE PUBLIC REACTION TO ITS TOUGH-TALKING CAMPAIGN, AND NOW APPARENTLY GENUINELY HOPEFUL THAT IT CAN WIN, THE PNA IS ALSO GIVING GREATER EMPHASIS IN ITS STATEMENTS TO THE CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN AND POLLING AND THE THREAT OF A RIGGED OUTCOME. IN REMARKS REMINISCENT OF JAYA PRAKASH NARAYAN'S STATEMENT IN NEW DELHI IN JUNE 1975, OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE WARNED CIVIL SERVANTS NOT TO ACCEPT UNLAWFUL ORDERS AND HAVE THREATENED RETRIBUTION TO ANY WHO TAMPER IMPROPERLY WITH THE BALLOTING. THEY HAVE

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TALKED ABOUT REVOLUTION IN THE EVENT OF A STOLEN ELECTION. THEY HAVE ALSO ENCOURAGED THEIR WORKERS TO REMAIN IN THE POLLING AREA ON ELECTION DAY TO ENSURE AGAINST FOUL PLAY. (WE UNDERSTAND THE PPP HAS ALSO SUGGESTED THE SAME TACTICS TO ITS WORKERS, THEREBY INCREASING THE PROSPECT OF VIOLENCE ON MARCH 7 AND 10.)

4. THE PPP. THE GOVERNMENT AND PPP LEADERSHIP IS AWARE OF THE GREAT DIFFICULTY THE PARTY FACES IN THE PUNJAB. (TWO SENIOR PPP LEADERS IN LAHORE HAVE TOLD US IN LAST FEW DAYS IN VIVID TERMS HOW BAD PARTY POSITION IN PROVINCE IS NOT ONLY IN CITIES BUT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AS WELL.) THE PARTY IS TAKING A SERIES OF COUNTERMEASURES.

A. THE PPP HAS STEPPED UP ITS CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES, WITH THE PUNJAB ITS PRIMARY TARGET. BEGUM BHUTTO IS ON THE STUMP THERE, AND THE PARTY'S LEADING PUNJAB ORATOR, RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS MINISTER KAUSAR NIAZI, HAS LEFT HIS SIALKOT CONSTITUENCY TO VIGOROUSLY TOUR THE PROVINCE. EDUCATION MINISTER PIRZADA HAS BEEN BROUGHT FROM SIND TO THE PUNJAB FOR RALLIES, EVEN THOUGH HE IS NOT A PERSUASIVE SPEAKER AND THE PPP FACES SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES IN KARACHI. (HIS OWN SEAT OUTSIDE THE CIT IS CONSIDERED SAFE.) COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO, ONE OF 15 PPP MNA CANDIDATES ELECTED UNOPPOSED IN SIND, IS ALSO IN THE PROVINCE. IMPORT OF THIS SINDHI TALENT AGAIN UNDERSCORES THE MEDIOCRE CHARACTER OF THE PUNJAB POLITICIANS WHOM BHUTTO HAS CHOSEN FOR HIGH OFFICE. MANY OF THESE ARE FACING SERIOUS CHALLENGES IN THEIR HOM CONSTITUENCIES.

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INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 5 ISLAMABAD 1791

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - TEXT B. OVERSHADOWING THESE PPP CAMPAIGNERS IS BHUTTO HIMSELF.

ADDRESSING LARGE PUBLIC GATHERINGS IN SUCH PUNJAB CITIES AS SIALKOT AND GUJRANWALLA, WHERE HE SCORED SOME OF HIS BIGGEST ELECTION VICTORIES IN 1970 AND IS NOW APPARENTLY MOST THREATENED, THE PM IS GIVING BASICALLY THE SAME SPEECH. HIS STANDARD THEMES, HEADLINED IN THE PRESS AND REPORTED AT GREAT LENGTH

ON THE GOP-OWNED RADIO AND TV, ARE CRITICAL OF THE PNA RATHER THAN FORWARD LOOKING TO WHAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL DO OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. HE HAS CLAIMED THAT CHAOS WILL FOLLOW A PNA VICTORY SINCE IT IS A MISALLIANCE WITH NO COHERENT POLICY, THAT MANY OF ITS ELEMENTS WERE OPPOSED TO THE CREATION OF PAKISTAN IN 1947 AND SIDED WITH SHEIKH MUJIB IN 1968-70, THAT IT IS THE TOOL OF WEALTHY LANDOWNERS AND CAPITALISTS, AND THAT ITS PROMISES, NOTABLY ITS (REITERATED) PLEDGE TO REDUCE PRICES TO THE 1970 LEVEL, ARE ABSURD AND IRRESPONSIBLE. REPLYING TO OPPOSITION PROMISES TO CREATE A MORE ISLAMIC-ORIENTED SOCIETY
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IN PAKISTAN, THE PM HAS MAINTAINED THAT HE AND HIS PARTY ARE JUST AS MUSLIM AS THE PNA, IF NOT MORE SO, AND HAS POINTED TO SUCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS THE LAHORE ISLAMIC SUMMIT AND THE DECLARATION OF A FRIDAY WEEKLY HOLIDAY. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT HE HAS DOWNPLAYED "ISLAMIC SOCIALISM," SINCE 1970 A MAJOR BHUTTO THEME, AND INDEED THE PARTY'S SOCIALIST PLATFORM PLANKS ARE SEEMINGLY BEING PURPOSEFULLY IGNORED BY PPP CAMPAIGNERS.

C. BHUTTO IS ALSO INCREASING HIS PERSONAL ATTACKS ON ASGHAR KHAN, AN INDICATION THAT HE ALSO BELIEVES THE RETIRED AIR MARSHAL HAS EMERGED AS THE DE FACTO LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION. AS WITH THE PNA CAMPAIGN, FOREIGN POLICY THEMES PLAY A SMALL PART: BHUTTO HAS ON OCCASION DEFENDED HIMSELF AGAINST THE CHARGE MADE BY SOME OPPOSITION LEADERS THAT HIS POLICIES TOWARD INDIA HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY STRONG, BUT BOTH THE CHARGES AND THE DEFENSE HAVE BEEN OVERSHADOWED BY THE PREDOMINANTLY DOMESTIC FOCUS OF THE CAMPAIGN.

D. THIS STEPPED UP CAMPAIGNING HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED BY THE GREATER USE OF TACTICS WHICH HAVE A LONG TRADITION OF ACCEPTABILITY IN PAKISTANI POLITICS. THE PARTY HAS STEPPED UP THE LARGE-SCALE BUSSING OF AUDIENCES TO RALLIES; OVER 5,000 POLICE CADETS WERE REPORTEDLY BROUGHT TO BHUTTO'S FEBRUARY 16 APPEARANCE IN SARGODHA. (THE PRO-PPP PRESS AND THE TV HAVE FOCUSED ON THE HUGE CROWDS WHICH HAVE TURNED UP AT THE PM'S RALLIES, IN AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO CREATE THE IMPRESSION, SO FAR AN INACCURATE ONE, THAT THERE IS A BHUTTO BANDWAGON.) WE UNDERSTAND THAT DIRECTIONS HAVE GONE OUT TO ENSURE A MAMMOTH RECEPTION FOR THE PRIME MINISTER IN LAHORE THIS SUNDAY; REPORTEDLY PEOPLE WILL BE BROUGHT FROM ALL OVER THE PUNJAB AND BEYOND FOR THE RALLY. THE PPP IS ALSO MAKING EXTENSIVE USE OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES IN THE RURAL AREAS TO TRANSPORT PARTY WORKERS, AND IS PRESSURING CIVIL SERVANTS TO WORK FOR THE PARTY DURING THE CAMPAIGN. THE FAMILY PLANNING AND MALARIA CONTROL PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN PINPOINTED BY THE PNA AS TWO ORGANIZATIONS BEING MOST MISUSED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE CAMPAIGN.
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E. WE HAVE ALSO RECEIVED REPORTS THAT THE PPP IS PREPARED TO GO BEYOND THESE LEGAL OR AT LEAST ACCEPTED METHODS TO GUARANTEE A RESPECTABLE VICTORY AT THE POLLS. CONTEMPLATED TACTICS ARE SAID TO INCLUDE BALLOT BOX STUFFING IN RURAL AREAS AND SAID TO INCLUDE BALLOT BOX STUFFING IN RURAL AREAS AND INTIMIDATION OF VOTERS ON ELECTION DAY. SUCH TACTICS ARE SOMEWHAT EASIER TO PURSUE IN RURAL AREAS WHERE THE ELECTORATE IS LESS SOPHISTICATED AND MORE EASILY INTIMIDATED.

5. ELSEWHERE. OUTSIDE PUNJAB, DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN LESS CONSEQUENTIAL. IN SIND, THE INTENSITY OF THE CAMPAIGN IS MOUNTING STEADILY, AS IS ITS VICIOUSNESS. THE PNA IS SHOWING CONSIDERABLE STRENGTH IN KARACHI AND OTHER URBAN AREAS, MORE THAN MANY OBSERVERS HAD EARLIER EXPECTED, AND IS BENEFITING FROM SUPERIOR URDU SPEAKING TALENT. THE PPP IS STRONG IN THE SINDHI--SPEAKING RURAL AREAS, WHERE IT HAS OF COURSE ALREADY WON MANY UNCONTESTED CONSTITUENCIES. TENSIONS ARE REPORTEDLY RISING IN THE FRONTIER, WHERE BHUTTO, TAKING A BREAK FROM HIS PUNJAB BARNSTORMING, ADDRESSES A MEETING IN PESHAWAR TODAY. THE PNA DECISION TO BOYCOTT THE BALUCHISTAN CONTESTS HAS TAKEN THAT PROVINCE PRETTY MUCH OFF THE POLITICAL MAP. THE ALLIANCE CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT IF IT WINS FRESH ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD THERE AND IN AZAD KASHMIR.

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AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY DACCA

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6. THE ELECTION COMMISSION CONTINUES TO PLAY WHAT BOTH SIDES AGREE IS BASICALLY AN IMPARTIAL ROLE. THE PETITION OF MAULANA ABBASI, WHO WANTED TO RUN AGAINST BHUTTO IN ALRKANA, HAS BEEN DISALLOWED, SO THE PM'S UNOPPOSED ELECTION STANDS. HOOWEVER, FRONTIER CHIEF MINISTER NASRULLAH KHATTAK'S UNOPPOSED ELECTION TO THE NA HAS BEEN REVOKED WITH THE EC'S FINDING THAT HIS PUTATIVE PNA OPPONENT WAS UNFAIRLY DENIED A PLACE ON THE BALLOT. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A MINOR FRACAS INVOLVING THE EC THIS PAST WEEK WITH THE PNA CLAIMING ITS ELECTION SYMBOL - THE PLOUGH - DID NOT LOOK LIKE A PLOUGH, MOST AGREE IT WAS ONLY AN OPPOSITION TACTIC TO GARNER ADDITIONAL PUBLICITY.

7. VIOLENCE IN THE CAMPAIGN SEEMS TO BE SLOWLY BUT STEADILY INCREASING. THE GOVERNMENT HAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THAT ONLY TWO PROPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED IN CAMPAIGN ALTERCATIONS SO FAR, BUT CONSULATE KARACHI REPORTS THE FIGURE IS SOMEWHAT HIGHER IN THE SIND AND THERE ARE FRESH PRESS STORIES OF OUTBREAKS IN PUNJAB.
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TEMPERS GROW HOTTER AS THE CAMPAIGN INTENSIFIES, AND SECTION 144 IS BEING REIMPOSED IN VARIOUS AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. WE UNDERSTAND THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET, HOWEVER, PROHIBITED ANY OPPOSITION RALLIES OR MARCHES.

8. MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES AS REPORTED LAST WEEK. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS HAS ONLY MINIMAL COVERAGE OF PNA ACTIVITIES. THE INDEPENDENT PRESS GIVES GREATER COVERAGE TO THE OPPOSITION WITH NAWA-I-WAGT STILL GIVING MORE SPACE TO THE PNA THAN THE PPP. BOTH RADIO AND TELEVISION ARE COVERING BOTH SIDES, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY SLANTED IN FAVOR OF THE PPP.

9. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT STUDENTS ARE BEOMING INCREASINGLY RESTIVE. ALL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN CLOSED THROUGH ELECTION DAY, OSTENSIBLY SO THEY CAN BE USED FOR POLLING. THEY WERE CLOSED THIS EARLY, HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF GOVERNMENT CONCERNS OVER POSSIBLE STUDENT ACTIVITIES. ANTI-PP STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN BOTH NOWSHERA AND PESHAWAR IN THE FRONTIER WERE HELD WHICH DEMANDED THE RELEASE OF WALI KHAN. ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY, STUDENTS REMAIN FAIRLY QUIESCENT. LABOR IS TRYING TO STAY OUT OF THE FRAY, BUT IS FEELING PRESSURES FROM BOTH SIDES. SOME IMPORTANT LABOR LEADERS HAVE DECLARED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE PPP BUT HAVE ALSO TOLD US THEY WILL NOT WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT PARTY. LABOR'S ATTITUDE SEEMS TO BE THAT IT IS TOO SOON TO ALIGN WITH EITHER SIDE.

10. WHAT HAS HAPPENED. WHAT MOST ASSUMED WOULD BE A DULL ELECTION CAMPAIGN, WITH A NEARLY UNANIMOUS BELIEF (INCLUDING IN THE OPPOSITION) THAT IT WOULD BE AN EASY PPP SWEEP, HAS GREATLY INTENSIFIED AND THE STAKES IN THE GAME HAVE BEEN INCREASING EVERY WEEK. WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE FEW WEEKS SINCE POLITICIANS OF ALL IDEOLOGICAL PERSUASIONS VIED WITH ONE ANOTHER FOR PPP TICKETS, WHICH THEY, AND ALMOST EVERYBODY ELSE, VIEWED AS SURE PASSPORTS TO VICTORY? HOW COULD THESE GRASSROOT POLITICIANS, AND SO MANY OTHERS, HAVE BEEN SO MISLED ABOUT WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN?

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A. FEW EXPECTED THE OPPOSITION TO UNITE AND TO AGREE AS SUCCESSFULLY AS THEY HAVE ON DIVISION OF NOMINATIONS. ALTHOUGH PNA LEADERS ARE NOW GIVING OUT THAT THEIR APPARENT INABILITY TO DECIDE ON A COORDINATED ELECTION STRATEGY WAS AN ELABORATE RUSE TO FOOL BHUTTO, THE FACTS SEEM TO US OTHERWISE. THE OPPOSITION ONLY MANAGED THROUGH SOME LAST MINUTE CONCESSIONS ON THE PART OF ITS LEADERS TO GET TOGETHER. STICKING TOGETHER HAS OF COURSE BEEN EASIER, WITH THINGS APPARENTLY GOING WELL FOR THEM.

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B. THE DEGREE OF PUBLIC DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT UNDERSTOOD BY THE POLITICIANS. THERE HAD BEEN PLENTY OF GRUMBLING ABOUT INFLATION, CORRUPTION, AND GOVERNMENT HIGHHANDEDNESS, BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF REPEATEDLY POSTPONED LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS AND OF CONTESTED BY-ELECTIONS, AND INDEED OF ANY OPPORTUNITY FOR SERIOUS OVERT POLITICAL ACTIVITY, THERE WAS NO WAY THIS COULD BE REGISTERED. THE FACT THAT THE OPPOSITION MANAGED UNEXPECTEDLY TO PULL ITSELF TOGETHER MAKES THE DISSATISFACTION THAT MUCH MORE POLITICALLY EXPLOITABLE.

C. PPP CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN BADLY CHOSEN IN TOO MANY CASES. MANY INSTANCES ARE BEING REPORTED OF CANDIDATES UNKNOWN IN THEIR CONSTITUENCIES, A STRANGE CHARGE IN LIGHT OF THE MASSIVE PRE-ELECTION RECRUITING DRIVE WHICH BROUGHT INTO THE PARTY MANY OF THE LOCAL "NOTABLES" WHO WERE EXPECTED TO RALLY THEIR TRADITIONAL FOLLOWERS BEHIND THE PPP. (A CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTIAL EXPLANATION IS THE PPP, SURFEITED WITH LEADERS, REWARDED SOME IN ALIEN AREAS WHEN THESE COULD NOT BE ACCOMMODATED IN THEIR OWN DISTRICTS.) THE PROBLEM OF "OLD" VS. "NEW" MEMBERS IS ALSO REPORTEDLY PROVING MUCH MORE DIFFICULT THAN HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED. MANY OLD STALWARTS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS ARE REPORTEDLY SITTING ON THEIR HANDS OR COVERTLY AND NOT-SO-COVERTLY HELPING PNA CANDIDATES. THE OPPOSITION'S STRENGTH OF COURSE ENCOURAGES THIS. THE PPP HIGH COMMAND IS REPORTEDLY SEEKING TO RALLY THE DISCONTENTED AS PART OF ITS COUNTERATTACK. (SO FARE THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT DEFECTIONS FROM THE PPP CAMP.)

D. FINALLY, THERE HAS BEEN A SNOWBALL EFFECT. THE ABILITY OF THE OPPOSITION TO DRAW LARGE AND ENTHUSIASTIC CROWDS AND TO PERSUADE PEOPLE TO CAMPAIGN ON THEIR BEHALF HAS ENCOURAGED OTHERS TO JOIN IN.

11. TWO AND A HALF WEEKS LEFT. THE CAMPAIGN IS NOW IN ITS CRUCIAL PHASE. AS REPORTS CONTINUE TO COME IN OF A BLEAK SITUATION FOR THE PPP IN THE PUNJAB CITIES, AND OF PROBLEMS FOR THE PARTY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AS WELL, IT IS CLEAR THAT TO ENSURE THE KIND OF RESPECTABLE ELECTORAL VERDICT THEY BELIEVE NECESSARY BHUTTO AND THE PPP MUST FURTHER STEP UP THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITY TO STEM THE PNA TIDE. THE PM'S POLITICAL ABILITIES AND CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT APPARATUS MEAN THAT THE PPP'S CAPABILITIES AND RECUPERATIVE POWERS ARE STILL SUBSTANTIAL AND SHOULD NOT BE UNDER-RATED. BHUTTO AND

THE PARTY LEADERSHIP ARE PREPARED TO DO WHAT THEY CONCLUDE IS REQUIRED TO WIN A SUBSTANTIAL VICTORY. THIS NOW SEEMS LIKELY TO INCLUDE LARGE SCALE MANIPULATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY, PARTICULARLY IN THE RURAL PUNJAB.

12. IN AN INCREASINGLY VOLATILE AND UNCERTAIN PICTURE, TWO QUESTIONS ARE NOW COMING TO THE FORE. THE FIRST IS WHAT WILL POPULAR REACTION BE TO THESE PPP EFFORTS. (RECENT REPORTS OF LARGE SCALE PROTEST SHUTDOWNS--HARTALS--IN SEVERAL PUNJAB AREAS, INCLUDING MULTAN, FOLLOWING ATTACKS ON PNA
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CAMPAIGNERS SUGGEST THE POSSIBILITY OF CONSIDERABLE TROUBLE IF THE PPP PULLS OUT ALL STOPS.) THE SECOND CONCERNS THE EXTENT TO WHICH BHUTTO AND THE PPP CAN COUNT ON THE POLICE AND THE CIVIL SERVANTS TO SUPPORT THEIR MOVES. THESE QUESTIONS ARE AS OF NOW UNANSWERABLE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
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Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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To: STATE
Type: TE
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Review Markings:
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22 May 2009
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